“Keep Me In The Loop!”: Increasing communication between Internal Medicine residents and primary care providers of admitted patients at San Francisco General Hospital

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The Problem

- Delayed or inaccurate communication between hospital-based and primary care physicians has been documented to lead to poor continuity of care and adverse outcomes
- A survey of 73 primary care providers (PCPs) from seven community-based clinics in the San Francisco safety net stated that when their patients were admitted, they were contacted by the inpatient medicine residents 58.5% of the time
- Only 7.3% of PCPs estimating that they were always contacted by the medicine team, and one-third (34%) of PCPs rated the quality of the communication as either fair or poor
- Survey of 24 Internal Medicine residents rotating at SFGH, revealed that only 37% of residents estimated that they contacted PCPs more than half of the time

Aim is to improve the frequency and quality of communication between inpatient Medicine teams and primary care physicians during the spring of 2011 by encouraging residents to document PCP communication in the SFGH EHR (electronic health record).

Project Goal(s)

- To establish long-term sustainability of the project, we will develop plans to involve the inpatient team-attendings more actively by:
  - emphasizing the importance of PCP communication during attending orientation each month
  - including a section in the attending attestation on admission H+P about PCP communication as a prompt to remind the team to contact the community physician

Challenges:

- Surrogate markers of communication (i.e. “PCP Communication Notes”) are simpler to track, although may not reflect the true level of communication occurring between inpatient medicine teams and PCPs
- This project tracked that the team had attempted to contact PCPs and doesn’t ensure that meaningful communication occurred
- It can be challenging to add another step in an already busy resident workflow, as evidenced by the 60% mean documentation rate

Opportunities:

- Personalized weekly feedback (initiated in mid-April) appears to have increased participation with the project independent of any other intervention
- Financial incentives for residents (as used in another PCP Communication Project at UCSF/Moffitt in 2009-2010) may be a stronger driver to change resident behavior than public reporting or individualized feedback

Next Steps

- In May/June a web-based survey (post-test) of the providers (PCPs) and residents will be administered to gauge their experience with the project
- Since 95.5% of residents believed that the responsibility of contacting the PCP should fall on R2/R3s leading the team, this should be set as an explicit requirement/expectation for residents during inpatient months to eliminate any ambiguity

Lessons Learned

- Increased participation with the project independent of any other intervention
- Financial incentives for residents may be a stronger driver to change resident behavior than public reporting or individualized feedback

UCSF Department of Medicine

Project Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Plan</th>
<th>Results / Progress to Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>January 2011</strong>: PDSA #1: Pilot with 1 resident on SF wards</td>
<td><strong>January 2011</strong>: Project Protocol (paper and web-based): Resident/Printed paper and web-based</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>March 1 – 15, 2011</strong>: Post with 2 residents on SF wards, additional template adjustments (PDSA cycle #2)</td>
<td><strong>March 10th 2011</strong>: Launched PDSA 2.0: Communication template to all inpatient Medicine teams at SFGH</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mid-April 2011</strong>: Team-based progress post-weekly progress email (PDSA cycle #5)</td>
<td><strong>May/June 2011</strong>: Project for post-intervention surveys of PCPs and residents</td>
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FIGURE 1: SFGH PCP Communication Note Project: Weekly Progress by Team

FIGURE 2: Project Goals: Weekly Progress by Team

FIGURE 3: Staff Log: PCP Communication Note Project: Weekly Progress by Team

IMAGE 1: PCP Communication Note

Legend of PDSA: Communication with the Inpatient Team

- PDSA #1: Communication with the Inpatient Team
- PDSA #2: Project Protocol (paper and web-based): Resident/Printed paper and web-based
- PDSA #3: Communication template to all inpatient Medicine teams at SFGH
- PDSA #4: Project for post-intervention surveys of PCPs and residents

Project Goal(s): Keep Me In The Loop!

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